

Transportation

Introduction

The United States population is growing older and living longer. Although the majority of older persons are living healthy and active lives, there are significant numbers of individuals who need community supports to help them meet their daily needs. Being able to drive is essential for older Americans living in the community to maintain their independence. As the population grows, it will be important to ensure that older Americans drive as long and as safely as possible and that alternatives are available to individuals who no longer drive.

Older Persons and Driving

- The number of older persons making trips is rapidly increasing, as are the frequency of their trips and the distance traveled.
- Most older persons avoid rush hour and drive fewer miles, shorter distances, and less at night. Collision rates decrease steadily with age.
- By the time a driver is 65, the risk of a major accident drops to less than 1%.
- Two-thirds of older adults who stop driving say it was because of physical impairments.
- One-third of older adults who do not drive rely on family and friends for their transportation. Others rely on public and volunteer transportation alternatives to maintain their mobility and independence.

Factors Affecting Driving Safety

The next few years will bring the largest ever group of older drivers to our roads and highways. The good news is that despite the declining physical conditions associated with advancing age, research is showing that older persons are successfully adjusting for these changes and are driving safely well into their 70s, 80s and 90s.

Access to transportation is an essential part of older persons' ability to remain independent in their communities. However, for some older persons, retiring from driving is necessary. The decision to retire from driving is a difficult choice but is important to deal with in a proactive way.

Retiring from Driving: It's a Family Affair

Some older drivers need the support of family and friends to make the transition from driving to utilizing transportation alternatives. To support an older relative in this transition, family members can:

- Prepare a list of safety, medical, and behavioral concerns related to continued driving;
- Discuss concerns, implications of continued driving, and ramifications of a crash with the family member;
- If the driver's physician or other professional recommends the older person no longer drive, get the information in writing and have it available for the discussion;
- Find out what the driver's medication instructions say about their affect on one's ability to drive (whether the medications are prescribed or over the counter);
- Identify transportation alternatives so they can begin making plans for how they will maintain their mobility and independence.

Alternatives to Driving

Retiring from driving does not mean retiring from life! There are many transportation services available in communities across the country for older adults who do not drive. Such alternatives may include para-transit, public transportation, senior van services, taxi vouchers, medical vans, and ride share programs.

To locate resources and transportation options, contact the local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). In a few states, the State Unit or Office on Aging serves as the AAA. To locate the appropriate AAA or local transportation provider, contact the Eldercare Locator, an information and assistance directory supported by the Administration on Aging (AoA). . Call the Eldercare Locator from anywhere in the nation toll-free at 1-800-677-1116, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. For 24-hour access to the Eldercare Locator, visit the website at www.eldercare.gov.

Working Together

AoA and the U.S. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2003 to assist their respective networks in the coordination of transportation services for older adults and to facilitate access to these services by older adults. In 2003 the two organizations held strategy sessions that culminated in an action plan.

In 2004, AoA and FTA continue to implement the MOU with a special focus on helping states and communities assess their level of coordination and develop action plans to move forward in this area, issuing a road map for coordinated planning across programs, and providing up-to-date research to inform program development. The action plan includes:

- Leveraging available resources at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Conducting regional workshops and providing technical assistance to help state and local agencies increase collaboration and partnerships.
- Implementing technologies that can provide opportunities to coordinate services, scheduling, and billing processes.
- Helping older adults and their families understand how to use and access their transportation options.

For additional information and updates about the Administration on Aging and the Federal Transit Administration Memorandum of Understanding and action plan, please visit the Administration on Aging Transportation Webpage at: <http://www.aoa.gov/prof/transportation/transportation.asp>

Additional Transportation Resources

Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility: www.fta.dot.gov/CCAM

Easter Seals Project Action National Assessable Travelers' Database:

http://projectaction.easterseals.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA_travelers_database&goShortcut=Go

Transportation Solutions for Caregivers: Easter Seals:

http://www.easter-seals.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ntl_trans_care

Community Transportation Association of America:

http://www.ctaa.org/ntrc/senior_publications.asp

When You Are Concerned: New York Office for the Aging:

<http://aging.state.ny.us/caring/concerned/index.htm>

Mini-Self Assessment of Driving Ability – Sedgwick County Department on Aging/Central Plains Area Agency on Aging:

<http://www.cpaaa.org/forms/Driving%20Self%20Assessment.pdf>

